Al-Tawhid and Its Social Implications

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The Essence of *Tawhid*

The day the Prophet (S) of Islam, charged with the mission of salvation of mankind, annunciated the principle of لاإلـهَإلاالله (*there is no god but Allah*), the first to oppose him-at first through derision and verbal attacks and later through the force of arms-were no other than the chiefs and leaders of various tribes. It was under their influence that other people also arose against the Prophet and his spiritual allies, and once again a shameful era in human history was repeated in the thirteen years that elapsed before Hijrah. This historical fact deserves close study for any new attempt to understand Islam in general, and in particular the principle of *Tawhid*, which is central to Islamic teachings.

One of the most unfortunate, or rather the greatest tragedy of our times, is the distortion and misinterpretation of the message brought by all God's prophets, namely, the doctrine of *Tawhid*, which is the most fundamental tenet of religion; because no other concept or doctrine in the history of human ideas has its power and potential for liberation and emancipation of oppressed human beings.

As far as we know, all prophetic missions were aimed at bringing about revolutionary change for the benefit of the human kind. The purpose which all the principal religions of the world aimed at, was to liberate the oppressed and downtrodden masses from the evil clutches of injustice and social discrimination, or, in the words of Erich Fromm, it was realization of the ideals of wisdom, brotherly love, reduction of human misery and stimulation of the sense of independence and responsibility (and of course realization of other sublime ideals-things a materialistic researcher fails to perceive).

All these aspirations and ideals are summarized in the principle of *Tawhid*. In propounding this principle, the prophets not only projected all their aims and purposes, but also paved the way for a struggle that ensued with the annunciation of this principle, moving a step nearer towards realization of the goal. This is the reason why, at a time when a great sense of urgency is attached to secondary ideals, ignorance or distortion of this basic principle, or its projection as a superficial and pedantic idea, is a misfortune not only for those who believe in a *Tawhidi* world outlook, but also those who cherish those secondary ideals.

We said that the polarization of groups during the early Islamic era itself can be indicative of the true importance of *Tawhid*.

In fact the dictum لاالٰهَ الاالله was, in the first place, aimed as a strong blow at those who rose to oppose it: the ruling and dominant class of the society. The acts which reflect hostile reaction against any movement are always eloquent revealers of its social standpoint and the extent of effectiveness and depth of its roots in that society. A face reading of the opponents and the knowledge of their group loyalties is sufficient to reveal its standpoint with respect to various classes and its social approach. The extent of intensity and earnestness on the part of its opponents can serve as an indicator to measure the extent of its depth and profundity also. The most reliable way to understand various prophetic missions is to scrutinize the ranks of its supporters as well as those of its opponents. If we minutely observe, we shall find that it was ever the dominant class of society which was the first to wage war against all the prophets of God, and was the staunchest of their enemies. From this we can distinctly perceive that the prophets and their religious movements were, of nature, opposed to the character of this class; they were against its exercise of power and force, its accumulation of wealth and, basically, against the very system of class stratification which gave it predominance over the rest of society.

Before we elucidate the principle of *Tawhid* from this point of view, that is, its rejection of social predominance by a single class, I think it necessary to mention the fact that *Tawhid*, contrary to the popular belief that it is merely an intellectual and philosophical theory, is not only a fundamental outlook regarding man and universe, but a social, economic, and political doctrine as well.

Amongst all religious and non-religious terms and concepts it would be difficult to find any term or concept so loaded with constructive and revolutionary implications, which cover diverse social and historical aspects of human existence. It was no accident that every one of all the Divine movements in history was launched with so much of emphasis on Unity of God, His unshared Divinity and authority over the whole universe.

Some of the various dimensions of the principle of *Tawhid* can be explained as follows.

Tawhid as a World Outlook

Tawhid as a world outlook implies the unity, coherence, and harmony between all parts of the universe. Since the system of creation is one, and everything in it is related to the same origin and source, there being no multiplicity of gods or creators, every constituent of the world is a part of. the same whole, and all parts constitute one unity; they are parts of a single whole, and hence have the same orientation;

..... مَّا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفَاوُتٍ .....

....Thou seest not in the creation of the All-Merciful any incongruity ....(67:3)

And:

أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى.....

***What, have they not meditated about their own selves? God created not the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is between them, save with the truth and for a stated term ....*(30:8)**

According to this outlook, the universe is a dynamic system like a caravan in which all the travellers are linked together in the manner of big and small parts of a machine, working together towards the same purpose and aim. The function and meaning of every part is according to the position it occupies in this organic whole. In its dynamic evolutionary course, every part fulfils its share in the system of mutual relationships. Every part helps in the proper functioning of other parts and is essential, too, in itself. Any kind of failure, stoppage or deviation in the functioning of any of the parts is sufficient to retard, or throw out of harmony, the whole system. Accordingly, an intricate system of profound interrelationships unites all the parts.

Tawhid also implies existence of purpose in the creation; everything is based upon carefully organized co-ordination, and a calculated order. There is `soul' and meaning in every individual part, as it is the work of a wise creator. There is, therefore, purpose and meaning to the entire universe, a meaning and purpose which is perceptible in some of its parts:

مَا آمَنَتْ قَبْلَهُم مِّن قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ

????? ????????? ????????? ???????????? ????? ???????????? ??????????

We created not the heaven and the earth and whatsoever is between them in play. **(21:16)**

In short, the whole affair is not at all a meaningless and absurd phenomenon; rather it is like a machine designed and set into operation for some definite purpose and use. We may ask as to what that purpose is, but not as to its wherefore. Like a meaningful poem, whose theme may be understood by giving it some thought, one can discover that purpose by thought and reflection; it is not an `idiot's tale, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

Besides, *Tawhid* also implies submission of all creatures in the universe to God; nothing in this collection is self-willed and resistant to His will. The laws governing the world, and everything that comes under the jurisdiction of these laws, are in complete submission to Divine will and command. Therefore, the existence of laws in Nature by no means negates the presence of God as its Sustainer and Source:

إِن كُلُّ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

None is there in the heavens and the earth but he comes to the All-Merciful as a servant. **(19:93)**

And:

..... بَل لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

....Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will. **(2:116)**

And also:

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّماوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

They esteem not God as He hath the right to be esteemed. The earth although shall be His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens shall be rolled in His right hand. Glory be to Him. High be He exalted above that they associate! **(39:67)**

Tawhid as an outlook of human existence, implies the equality and unity of all human beings in their relation with God. He is the Lord of all human beings. No one has any special relationship with Him denied to others. He is not the God of a specific community or a particular tribe which may enjoy special privileges over other communities and tribes through His patronage; all are equal before Him. If He makes any distinctions, it is on the basis of struggle and effort for attainment of piety and pursuance of His path-something which is open to all human beings, and which alone can promise man's edification

وَقَالُواْ اتَّخَذَ اللّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَل لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

And they say, `God has taken to Him a son'. Glory be to Him! Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; all obey His will. **(2:116)**

And:

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلاَ كُفْرَانَ لِسَعْيِهِ وَإِنَّا لَهُ كَاتِبُونَ

And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, being a believer, no un-thankfulness shall befall his endeavour; We Ourselves write down for him. **(21:94)**

And also

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you ....(49:13)

Tawhid also bears the notion of homogeneity, equality and unity of human origin. Humanness is the single basic element ingrained in the nature of all human individuals. Human beings associated with the different social strata are neither the creations of different gods so that there can exist any disparity in their essential nature, giving rise to insuperable barriers amongst them; nor it is that the god of the upper classes of society is more powerful than that of the lower classes. All are the creation of one and the same God, and all are uniform in their fundamental essence .

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُواْ رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ .....

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you of a single soul ....(4:1)

Tawhid also means equality and homogeneity in human potentialities of development and perfection; since everyone of us is endowed with the same type of human essence and constitution, no one is incapable of traversing the straight path of spiritual exaltation and progress. Accordingly, the Divine call is a general call addressed to all humanity in general, not to any specific race, class or individual-although there is the possibility that differences of social atmospheres and conditions may subject individuals to varying effects. However, these negative factors by themselves can never determine human behaviour, or turn men permanently into saints or devils, or deprive them of the capacity of free choice. Addressing the Prophet (S), the Quran says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ .....

***We have sent thee not, except to mankind entire (not to any specific community) ....* (34:28)**

.....وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَلِلنَّاسِرَسُولاً...

***....And We have sent thee as a messenger to mankind ....* (4:79)**

The Quran also says in this context:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءكُم بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًافَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ بِاللّهِ وَاعْتَصَمُواْ بِهِ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا

***O men, proof has come to you from your Lord, We have sent down to you a manifest light. As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and will guide them to Him on a straight path.* (4:174-175)**

Tawhid also implies the liberation and freedom of mankind from bondage and servitude of multiple varieties of non-Gods; in other words, it stands for the necessity of exclusive servitude to God. The principle of *Tawhid* negates the mode of living in subjection (intellectual, cultural, economic or political) to creatures, the various forms of non-Gods, whose service takes the place of the worship of God, or degrades it to secondary significance. The doctrine of *Tawhid* considers man as a servant of God, liberating him from the bondage and servility to any thing, individual, or system which takes the central place of God in the scheme of life.

Thus the principle of *Tawhid* implies submission to Divine authority, and negation of every kind of domination by non-God in every form and shape:

... إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلاَّ لِلّهِ أَمَرَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ ...

***Sovereignty belongs only to God; He has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him. That is the right religion ....* (12:40)**

وَقَضَى رَبُّكَ أَلاَّ تَعْبُدُواْ إِلاَّ إِيَّاهُ ...

Thy Lord has decreed that you shall worship none but Him ....(17:23)

On this basis, *Tawhid* also implies the inherent worth and value of the human being. The human being is more exalted and worthy than that he should pay obeisance to anything but God. It is the Absolute Being, the Absolute Beauty and Perfection alone, which deserves to engage man's love and adoration. This emphasis on the exaltation of the object of worship itself implies exaltation of the station of the worshipper, i.e. the human being. Nothing except the Perfect Being is worthy of man's praise and adoration. All the idols, animate or inanimate, which have imposed themselves on the hearts and minds of human beings, and have forcefully encroached upon the realm of the Almighty's authority over human existence, are nothing but filth and abomination, which defiles human being's natural purity and grace, bringing him degradation and disgrace. In order that man should reclaim his exalted station, it is essential that he exterminates the unholy influence of the idols from his life. No materialistic humanism has ever succeeded in bringing a like profundity and elegance to the discussion of human worthiness and greatness to the extent of *Tawhid*:

...فَاجْتَنِبُواالرِّجْسَمِنَالْأَوْثَانِوَاجْتَنِبُواقَوْلَالزُّورِحُنَفَاء لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاء فَتَخْطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ

....And eschew the abomination of idols, and eschew the speaking of falsehood being men pure of faith unto God, not associating with Him anything; for whosoever associates with God anything, is as though he has fallen from heaven and the birds snatch him away, or the wind sweeps him headlong into a place far away. **(22:30-31)**

And:

لاَّ تَجْعَل مَعَ اللّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولاً

Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt sit condemned and forsaken. **(17:22)**

And also:

... وَلاَ تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا

Set not up with God another god, or thou wilt be cast into Gehanna, reproached and rejected. **(17:39)**

The principle of *Tawhid* also includes the notions of unity and uniformity in the field of human existence. Human existence is a synthesis of subjective and objective reality, thought and action. If any one of these two, or even a part of each, falls under the influence of anti-God forces, it results in the formation of a split personality. The faith in God is mixed with idolatrous tendencies. In such conditions, man, like a compass needle influenced by an alien magnetic field, loses his true orientation; that is, he deviates from the straight path of God, the Pole of righteous human orientation-a deviation which is alien to the human nature:

... أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاء مَن يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنكُمْ إِلاَّ خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ...

***....What, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on the Day of Resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible chastisement? ....*(2:85)**

The principle of *Tawhid* also implies necessity of man's harmony with the world around him. The vast realm of the universe, a scene of innumerable actions and reactions among various laws which determine completely even the most insignificant phenomena in it, is a unit governed by coherent and harmonious laws-a coherence and harmony of which the human world is also a part. Although the human world is subject, in addition to the general laws of Nature, to a particular set of laws special to itself, yet it is always in harmony with other laws governing the rest of phenomena beyond it. But man, unlike his other fellow creatures who are bound to tread the path of Nature without any choice whatsoever, is endowed with the power of free will and free choice. He, unlike them, carries the burden of freedom together with the obligation to harmonize his life with the rest of Nature-a harmony which is also the path of his exaltation and progress. This means that he always carries within himself the alternative to deviate from the course of nature:

... فَمَن شَاء فَلْيُؤْمِن وَمَن شَاء فَلْيَكْفُرْ...

***....so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve ....*(18:29)**

The principle of *Tawhid* calls man to follow the path of nature, which is being followed by the whole universe. It seeks to unite him in his search with the vast domain of being, and strives to create an absolute unity and solidarity between the universe and man, who is its most essential partner in the realm of existence:

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

What, do they desire another religion than God's, and to Him has surrendered whoso in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned? **(3:83)**

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ ...

Hast thou not seen how to God prostrate all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind? ....**(22:18)**

Tawhid as a Social Approach

The principle of *Tawhid* reserves the authority to determine and dictate in matters pertaining to the world or to human society solely for God. This right belongs solely to God, because He is the creator of mankind and the universe, and the designer of all that is in it. He is perfectly aware of all their possibilities and requirements. He knows all the physical and spiritual potentialities of man and also the hidden treasures of the earth, their balance, composition, equilibrium and utility.

Only He can decide about the mode and programme of human life, and determine the outlines of human relationships and man's social and legal systems. Thus, this is the natural right of God, which follows from the fact that He is man's creator. Therefore, any intervention on the part of others in determining the course of human action, is equivalent to infringement on Divine prerogatives, which in turn amounts to a claim of being equal to God, and hence is tantamount to shirk or polytheism:

فَلاَ وَرَبِّكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىَ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لاَ يَجِدُواْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُواْ تَسْلِيمًا

But no, by thy Lord! They will not believe till they make thee the judge regarding the disagreement between them then find no impediment in their souls touching thy verdict, and submit with full submission. **(4:65)**

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَن يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ وَمَن يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُّبِينًا

It is not for any believer, man or woman when God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in the affair. Whosoever disobeys God and His Messenger has gone astray into manifest error. **(33:36)**

The principle of *Tawhid* negates any right of sovereignty and guardianship of anyone over human society except God. Sovereignty of men over men, when considered as an independent right bereft of responsibility, necessarily leads to repression and tyranny. It is only when the affairs of society are entrusted by a Power Transcendental to an individual or a council of rulers, with a power commensurate with responsibilities, can society be expected to be free from all deviations and excesses. In religious ideology, this Transcendental Power is no other than God Himself, whose wisdom and knowledge encompass all being:

... لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

....not so much as the weight of an atom in the heavens and earth escapes from Him ....**(34:3)**

His awesome qualities of glory and power,

(شَدِيدُالعِقابِعَزِيزٌذُوانْتِقام) do not leave room for any pretext for slightest slip or deviation from His path for those appointed by Him:

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ

Had he invented against Us any saying, We would have seized him by the right hand, and We would surely have cut his life-vein. **(69:44-46)**

The Divinely appointed ruler (or council of rulers), unlike a `majority' or a 'nation', is not susceptible to deception and domination. He is not like a `party' which can be turned into a tool of dictatorship and repression. He is not an aristocrat who can be either bought, or enticed into participation in an intrigue.

If it is a dictate of reason that orderliness of human life necessitates that all human systems, organizations, and institutions should be linked to a single centre-something which is true of the rest of the universe-that centre can be nothing but the powerful hand of the Almighty God, the Creator of all being.

So sovereignty and authority is solely the right of God, exercised by means of those appointed by Him those who are the most suitable for this office according to the criteria laid down by the Divine ideology. It is by their means that the Divine laws and ideals can be implemented, resulting in realization of a Divine social order:

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللّهِ أَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلاَ يُطْعَمُ قُلْ إِنِّيَ أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلاَ تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Say: "Shall I take to myself as protector other than God, the Originator of the heavens and of the earth. He who feeds and is not fed?" Say: "I have been commanded to be the first of them that surrender. "Be not thou of the idolaters. **(6:14)**

And

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلاَةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

Your guardian is only God, and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer and pay the alms while bowing down. **(5:55)**

And also

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ مَلِكِ النَّاسِ إِلَهِ النَّاسِ

Say: `I take refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind.' **(114:1-3)**

The principle of *Tawhid* specifies that the absolute right of ownership of all the world's resources belongs solely to God. Nobody else can claim an independent right of ownership over anything. All things are given only as a trust into the custody of man, to be used as means for attaining human perfection and edification. These natural resources, which are the products of efforts of myriads of creatures and natural forces, should not be allowed to be destroyed, misused, or abandoned without use, or to be used for any purpose other than progress and edification of mankind. Whatever there is in human hands is for man, but it has been bestowed upon man by God. Accordingly, they should be utilized for purposes as determined by Him; that is for the purpose and end which is natural, and for which they have been created. Its use and employment for a purpose other than that is misuse, deviation from the path of Nature, and corruption. Man's role is merely limited to utilization of these resources in the right way:

قُل لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَن فِيهَا إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Say: "Whose is the earth and whosoever is therein, if you have knowledge?' They will say, `God's.' Say: `Will you not then remember?' **(23:84-85)**

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً ...

***It is He who created for you all that is in the earth ....*(2:29)**

... اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا ...

***....Serve God! You have no god other than He. It is He who raised you from the earth, and has given you to live therein ....*(11:61)**

وَالَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللّهُ بِهِ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الأَرْضِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ ...

***And those who break the covenant of God after His compact, and who snap what God has commanded to be joined, and who work corruption in the earth-their shall be curse ....*(13:25)**

The principle of *Tawhid* assigns equal rights to all human beings on all the resources of the world, which are Divine bounties. All opportunities and possibilities belong equally to all human beings, so that everyone can derive benefit from these resources according to his needs. No region of this realm of bounties provided by God is an exclusive domain of some denied to all others. All are free to exercise their initiative in exploiting the myriads of opportunities scattered throughout the world. There is no discrimination on the basis of ethnic, racial, geographical, historical, or even ideological, grounds .

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً ...

It is He who created for you all that is in the earth .... **(2:29)**

We can find numerous such statements in the Quranic verses:

وَالأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ ...

And the cattle He created them for you; in them is warmth, and uses various, and of them you eat, and there is beauty in them for you when you bring them home to rest and when you drive them forth abroad to pasture; and they bear your loads ....**(16:5-7)**

هُوَ الَّذي اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّماءِ ماءً لَكُمْ... يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ ...وَماذَرَاَلَكُمْ فِي الاَرْضِ ... وهو الَّذي سَخَّرَ البَحْرَ لتَاْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْماً طَرِيّاً ...

....He it is Who sends down to you out of heavens water ....Therewith He brings forth for you crop ....And that which He has created for you in the earth ....and He it is who subjected the sea to you that you may eat fresh meat from thence ....**(16:10-14)**

In numerous verses, the Quran addresses itself to mankind in general; no specific race, group or sect is implied:

...وَلَوْشَاءلَهَدَاكُمْأَجْمَعِينَ

If He willed, He would have guided you all ....**(16:9)**

إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ...

Your god is One God ....**(16:22)**

Whatever has been mentioned till now was merely a fraction of the vast and multifaceted meanings incorporated in this principle. But this brief discussion is sufficient to show that the principle of *Tawhid* is not just a philosophical and abstract notion without practical implications, which does not cover all dimensions of human existence and is irrelevant to practical life and its orientation. It is not a doctrine that seeks to replace some existing dogmas and to substitute one belief for another in the minds of men. Rather it is an all-inclusive outlook of the world, man, his situation in the universe, his direction in history, his possibilities and potentialities, his eternal aims and ideals, and the direction and destination of his exaltation.

The principle of *Tawhid* is moreover a sociological doctrine which offers a plan for the creation of a social atmosphere harmonious with human nature-an atmosphere in which man can make rapid, unhindered progress, and attain his highest perfection. It suggests a certain social pattern and delineates its essential outlines. Accordingly, it is a manifesto of revolutionary change when applied to *taghuti* societies (societies which are based upon ignorance of the human situation and negation or subversion of man's righteous values). It brings about a revival and reawakening in sickly and dead hearts, inducing storms in stagnant waters of societies. It bulldozes into a level ground their unjust undulations, and brings about a revolutionary change in its spiritual, social, ethical, and economic institutions. In short, it is an all-around assault on the status quo and the ruling forces which protect it, dissipating the atmosphere and transforming the environment which nourish and sustain these forces.

So we see that the principle of *Tawhid* is not merely an old solution to dogmatic and doctrinal problems of faith with a restricted arena of action, but is a new path before mankind. Although it rests on an intellectual and theoretical basis, it is essentially a fresh plan for life and action.

It is on account of such an interpretation of *Tawhid* that we believe the principle of *Tawhid* to be the base and cornerstone upon which the edifice of religion stands. On the contrary, a principle which merely speculates regarding abstract metaphysical, ethical, and gnostic ideas is no more than a feeble apparition which can never provide the great impetus necessary for setting into motion Islam as a constructive ideology and a sociological doctrine.

In every age there were people who, in spite .of their faith in God and *Tawhid*, overlooked its practical and social implications; such believers-who existed in every age-have in practice lived like those who do not believe in *Tawhid*, in the sense that their belief did not awaken in them any feeling of disharmony with the non-*Tawhid*i status quo of their times; their belief did not cause them any suffocation and uneasiness despite the putrid, stultifying atmosphere loaded with shirk which engulfed their day-today lives.

In the days of advent of Islam, in Mecca, then the centre of the cult of popular Arab idols, there did exist a number of followers of the monotheistic faith of Abraham (A). But since *Tawhid* was no more than an intellectual doctrine of their private and personal faith, their presence did not exert any influence on the social and intellectual atmosphere of the pre-Islamic pagan society. Their presence was not felt even to the slightest degree, nothing was disturbed, and all led a peaceful life. They were undisturbed by the shameful and abominable customs and practices of their countrymen. With their approach to *Tawhid* as an abstract doctrine, their lack of effect and influence was what can be expected. It was in such conditions that Islamic monotheism emerged as a committed and comprehensive approach with an entirely new programme and model of social existence. At the very first stage, it exhibited the revolutionary appeal of its message as reflected by its followers and opponents. All people at once knew that this message envisaged a new political, economic, and social order, a programme adamant in its vision and unwilling to reconcile with the status quo. It unequivocally negated the status quo and affirmed a new order.

It was this clarity and freedom from ambiguity in its message that inspired such a great enthusiasm and readiness to self-sacrifice in its followers, and forced the opponents to a determined opposition.

This historical truth should be taken as a criterion and standard for estimation of the sincerity of profession of *Tawhid* for all phases of history. Whenever such claims are made by the likes of the monotheists of Mecca before the advent of Islam, we can only doubt the sincerity of their claims. The kind of conception of *Tawhid* which reconciles itself to worship of idols and gods besides the One God, a conception that does not go beyond an abstract doctrine in the believer's mind, is no more than a fake version of the real monotheism as preached by the prophets of God.

It is in the light of such a vision of *Tawhid* that we can discover the secret of influence and expansion of Islam during the early days, and understand the causes of the retrogression, decline and passivity of later ages.

The Holy Prophet of Islam (S) laid down the principle of *Tawhid* as a path before mankind; but, afterwards, it was merely reduced to the status of an abstract theory and a subject of theoretical discussions and debates. In the days of the Prophet (S), it was a fresh world outlook and a new programme of life;. later, the same principle served as no more than a topic of theological dissections and leisurely scholarly pursuits. In the days of the Prophet (S), it formed the infrastructure of the whole system, and the axis of all social, political, and economic relationships; but later it became merely a show-piece and an embellishment of scholarly endeavour. What else could be expected from a decorative and formal auxiliary which had no active and constructive role to play?

From what we have said, it is obvious that *Tawhid* is a model for a new social order and a new life. It is the name of a system regarded as the most appropriate by Islam for the purpose of comprehensive human development and progress. And, similarly, from a theoretical point of view, it is an outlook which is the philosophical foundation and infrastructure of that system.

After this brief introduction, we may return to what we said at the beginning of our discussion, and examine this problem from a different angle. It has been said that the initial opposition to the principle of *Tawhid* came from powerful chieftains of tribes and leaders of pre-Islamic society. This shows that, more than anyone else,. the dominant class of the society-or in the words of the Quran, the *mustakbirun* (lit. the haughty)-formed the primary target of its blows. Throughout history, whenever the call of

Tawhid reached any society, and pronounced its policy with respect to the dominant class, it was immediately faced with the conflicting responses of the two opposite poles of society: opposition and antagonism on the part of the *mustakbirun*, and support and acceptance on the part of the *mustad`afun* (the oppressed section of society). These types of opposite reactions are, in fact, the characteristic quality of true *Tawhid*; that is, at all times whenever the principle of *Tawhid* was propounded, or whenever it will be propounded in its real form, such a typical situation is bound to arise.

Let us see whichever among the diverse dimensions of *Tawhid* is in direct clash with the interests of the class of oppressors. In other words, what aspect of *Tawhid* and which of its social programmes has this sensitivity of forcing its opponents to oppose it in a relentless and determined manner?

The various characteristics of the *mustakbirun*, as enumerated by the Quran, can be of ample guidance to us in this regard. In more than forty places the Quran delineates their psychological attributes, their social position, and their ambitious tendencies. Some of these characteristic features we will now discuss.

They passionately negate God as the sole sovereign and absolute master of everything as signified in the dictum :

لااِلٰـهَااِلاالله (there is no god except God); although they may be indifferent to the notion of monotheism as an abstract doctrine with limited or with no practical implications:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

When it was said to them, `There is no god but God', they were ever waxing proud. **(37:35)**

Without any authentic criteria and standards of judging human merit, they consider themselves superior to others on the basis of pagan criteria such as wealth and power:

... فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً ...

....And they waxed proud in the earth without right, and they said, `Who is stronger than we in might?'... **(41:15)**

It is under the influence of the same false notions that they reject the Divine Revelation, which is a message for establishing new values and a new social order:

وَإِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا وَلَّى مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا كَأَنَّ فِي أُذُنَيْهِ وَقْرًا فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

And when our signs are recited to such a man, he turns away, waxing-proud, as though he heard them not, and in his ears were deafness; so give him tiding of a painful chastisement. **(31:7)**

They opposed the Prophet's call for liberation and change, under the pretext that "had he been truthful, we would have recognized him before others", and that "God should have directly addressed us without a mediator or intermediary", and they waged war against him:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَّا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ ...

And the unbelievers say as regards the believers, `If there had been aught good in him, they would not have outstripped us in [accepting] him .... **(46:11)**

And

وَإِذَا جَاءتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُواْ لَن نُّؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتَى مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ اللّهِ ...

And when a sign came to them, they said, `We will not believe until we are given the like of what God's Messengers were given' .... **(6:124)**

They charged the Prophet, the carrier of the message of *Tawhid*, with ambition and profit-seeking, and by this means and by hankering to support of their outdated and degenerate traditions-which preserved the status quo--they tried to weaken the influence of the call of *Tawhid* among the people:

قَالُواْ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتَلْفِتَنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءنَا وَتَكُونَ لَكُمَا الْكِبْرِيَاء فِي الأَرْضِ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكُمَا بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

[Addressing Moses] They said, `Art thou come to us to turn us from that we found our fathers practising, and that the domination in the land might belong to you two? We do not believe you.' **(10:78)**

By repressive, coercive, and deceptive means, they tried to hold the people in the state of exploitation, unconditional submission, and slavery, and to incite them to resist and oppose any efforts of emancipation from their domination:

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا

***And they [the followers of the mustakbirun on the Day of Resurrection] shall say, `Our Lord, we obeyed our chiefs and great ones, and they led us astray from the way.'* (33:67)**

وَإِذْ يَتَحَاجُّونَ فِي النَّارِ فَيَقُولُ الضُّعَفَاء لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنتُم مُّغْنُونَ عَنَّا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ

***....Then the weak shall say unto those who waxed proud, `Why, we were your followers, will you avail us now against any part of the Fire?'* (40:47)**

قَالَ الْمَلأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ يُرِيدُ أَن يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ

***Said the Council of the people of Pharaoh, `Surely this man is a cunning sorcerer who desires to expel you from your land; [in the light of what we have said] what do you command?'* (7:109-10)**

And at last when the prophets and their supporters revolted against the oppressive regimes of the rulers, trying to establish a new order, the oppressors made them the targets of their attacks with extreme ruthlessness:

قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوَقُودِ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ وَهُمْ عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ

Slain were the Men of the Pit, of the fuel-fed fire, when they sat by it, and were themselves witnesses of what they did to the believers. **(85:4-7)**

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَن يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَن يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ

And Pharaoh said, `Let me slay Moses, and let him call to his Lord. I fear that he may change your religion, or that he may cause corruption to appear in the land. **(40:26)**

These are few of the various characteristics of the oppressors that the Quran enumerates in its verses. There are many specimens where the Quran goes beyond portraiture and describes the mustakbirun as a specific type representing a particular class character:

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِن بَعْدِهِم مُّوسَى وَهَارُونَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ بِآيَاتِنَا فَاسْتَكْبَرُواْ ...

Then We sent forth after them Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his Council with Our signs, but they waxed proud .... **(10:75)**

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَلَقَدْ جَاءهُم مُّوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

And Qarun (Korah), and Pharaoh, and Haman; Moses came to them with clear signs, but they waxed proud in the earth .... **(29:39)**

We know about the vanity of the Pharaoh; his aides like Haman, who was his prime minister, and مَلَأِفِرْعَوْنَ , who are other officials and authorities, the pillars of his establishment-all of them are his guides and advisors devoted to preservation of the oppressive status quo (see 7:126). We also know that Qarun was one who accumulated great amounts of wealth. The dominant class in pagan society, without any deservedness whatsoever, seizes political and economic power; for perpetuating its exploitive and unjust domination, it also acquires a cultural and doctrinal monopoly, thus bending the public mind into continued submission and conformity with the status quo. In order to safeguard its interests and privileged status, it is willing to enter into an unrelenting struggle against any enlightening and revolutionary movement-a struggle which is fateful and vital for its survival, and a matter of life and death for it.

Now returning to the main two topic of our discussion what was the exact manner in which the prophets propounded the principle of *Tawhid*? Evidently, the prophetic approach to *Tawhid*-which is also the most essential ingredient of their school of thought-is indicative of the particular aspect of *Tawhid* which is unacceptable to the class of mustakbirun, and the reasons for their rejection of it. The nature of prophetic approach to *Tawhid* also explains why this class cannot tolerate this doctrine in its prophetic formulation. We know that the doctrine of *Tawhid* was the first and foremost item in the invitation of the prophets. The following statement of the Prophet (S) is well-known:

قُولُوا لا اِلٰهَ اِلا اللهُ تُفْلِحُوا

Say, there is no god except God, that you may be delivered.

The following sentence uttered by numerous prophets such as Nuh, Hud, Salih, Shu'ayb and others is the most fundamental issue in the call to their peoples; it is mentioned in several places in the Quran:

...يَاقَوْمِاعْبُدُواْاللَّهَمَالَكُممِّنْإِلَهٍغَيْرُهُ...

***....O people, serve God, there is no god except Him ....* (7:59)**

As can be seen in these statements, what is emphasized more than anything else, is negation of the worship of non-God s. They represent the prophetic call, warning the unaware, ignorant masses, engulfed in the darkness of paganism and taghut-worship, and calling them to declare war against pretenders to divinity.

Who in a society are pretenders to divinity? What does it mean to wage war against taghut? What social goals are envisioned to be fulfilled by this mobilization?

Usually the phrase `claim to divinity' is taken to mean a pretension to be `god' or a `deity' or a supernatural entity-things in which men have always believed throughout history. This is, of course, a superficial meaning of this phrase. This is not to deny existence of superstitious tyrants of antiquity, who, possessing political and social power, had led the gullible public to believe that the king possessed supernatural qualities. But a close study of words such as `worship' (*ibadah*) and `divinity' as they occur in the Quran, leads us to conclude that the phrase `pretenders to divinity' has a much wider meaning.

The Quran has used the term worship (‘*ibadah*) in the sense of unconditional submission and obedience to any person or thing. Whenever we submit unconditionally to anyone, act according to his will, obey his command, and completely resign ourselves to his will, it implies that we `worship' him by all means. Reciprocally, if any external or inward force-either belonging to the external world or coming from inside our own personality--so succeeds in making us submissive and docile to it as to acquire a total grip on our body and soul, and channels all our energies in a preferred direction towards preferred goals, it is our `god' and we are its worshippers (*`ubbad*). The following verses of the Quran describe this process. Addressing the Pharaoh, Moses (A) says:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

That is a blessing thou reproach me with, having enslaved the Children of Israel! **(26:22)**

The Pharaoh and his colleagues, while conversing with one another, say:

... أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عَابِدُونَ

.... `What, shall we believe two mortals like ourselves, whose people are our servants?' **(23:47)**

Addressing his father, Abraham (A) says:

يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا

O Father, serve not Satan: surely Satan is a rebel against the All-Merciful. **(19:44)**

Addressing humanity, God says:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Made I not covenant with you, Children of Adam, that you should not serve Satan-surely he is a manifest foe to you? **(36:60)**

In promise to the `men of understanding', God says:

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَن يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَى...

And those who eschew the serving of idols and turn penitent to God, for them is good tidings **....(39:17)**

Addressing those who ridicule believers for their faith in God and the Revelation, God says:

... مَن لَّعَنَهُ اللّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ أُوْلَئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَاناً وَأَضَلُّ عَن سَوَاء السَّبِيلِ

...Whomsoever God has cursed, and with whom He is wrath, and made some of them apes and swine, and worshippers of taghut-they are worse situated, and have gone further astray from the right way. **(5:60)**

In these verses, service and submission to the Pharaoh and his clique, or submission to tyrants or to Satan-all these practices are regarded as `worship'. These, as well as various other verses, indicate the Quranic conception of worship as an absolute and total submission to any real or imaginary power, willingly or under compulsion, accompanied with or without a feeling of spiritual adoration and reverence. In all these conditions that specific power or object is the object of worship and deity, and the follower a worshipper and devotee.

This explanation makes it clear that the concept of god or divinity is equivalent to the concept of `the object of worship'.

In a pagan system, where people are divided into the two classes of the *mustakbirun* and the *mustad'afun*-i.e. the dominating class of rich exploiters, and the class of the downtrodden and the deprived-the most conspicuous manifestation of the relation between the `object of worship' and the `worshippers' is the unjust relationship between the two classes. It is not at all sufficient for the sake of identification of idols and gods of historical societies to make a study of the real or imaginary, animate or inanimate `deities' of their cults; their true idols and `gods' are the *mustakbirun* themselves, who have subjugated the oppressed *mustad'afun* to their authority and turned them into worshipping slaves to satisfy their own greed, ambition for power, and predatory ends.

Polytheism (shirk) is the real religion of such societies, since there are multiple poles and powers which exercise their command over the people, and draw them in their desired direction under total submission. Polytheism and idolatry mean obeying and following someone instead of God or besides God; that is, resignation to the will of non-God's in all affairs of life, surrender to other powers and authorities besides God, and reliance on them as source of guidance and primary means of fulfillment of most important human needs.

The principle of *Tawhid* is in direct contradiction with the cult of polytheism, since it demands the negation of all gods, refusal to submit to their authority, resistance to their domination and authority, total dissociation from their help. and sympathy, and, ultimately, their rejection, and total submission to God's will.

The first tenet of the religious doctrine of all prophets of God was exactly this negation of polytheism on the one hand and affirmation of *Tawhid* on the other:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولاً أَنِ اعْبُدُواْ اللّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُواْ الطَّاغُوتَ ...

And We sent forth among every nation a messenger [saying]: `Serve you God, and eschew idols' .... **(16:36)**

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

And We sent never a messenger before thee except that We revealed to him, [saying], `There is no god but I, so serve Me.' **(21:25)**

The prophets of God denounced corrupt and decadent systems of the polytheists through this principle, and encouraged the people to fight against the current idols (*taghut*)-those who guarded these systems, and rebelled against true human values, and who had imposed upon people their absurd value system in order to maintain their own oppressive status. Negation of polytheism was actually the negation of all social, economic, and political institutions, which constituted the basic infrastructure of pagan societies, and which used various forms of polytheistic cults as a doctrinal shield to protect and maintain the perverse state of affairs.

The denouncement of gods and idols implies the rejection of all such individuals who, through coercion and deception, indulge in the acts of repression, and impose themselves upon the people in order to satiate their inordinate, unlimited lusts.

Moses, by propounding this principle, and by declaring the supreme authority of the `Lord of all worlds,' waged a war against the Pharaoh and denouned him. The courtiers of the Pharaoh, of course, in return denounced Moses as an unbeliever in their gods, and accused him of the crime of denying traditional deities:

وَقَالَ الْمَلأُ مِن قَوْمِ فِرْعَونَ أَتَذَرُ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُواْ فِي الأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتَكَ ...

Then said the Council of the people of Pharaoh, `Wilt thou leave Moses and his people to work corruption in the land, and abandon thee and thy gods?'... **(7:127)**

But the Pharaoh, as well as his corrupt clique, knew very well that those `gods,' those lifeless idols, did not serve any purpose except as a shield for their own pretension to divinity, and as a vital pretext for the living idols for perpetuation of their own godhood. It was logical that in retaliation to his invitation to submit to the One God, the Lord of all worlds, the Lord of the East and the West, of the earth and heavens, Moses should have been threatened with imprisonment, torture and death.

قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ

Said he (the Pharaoh), `If thou takest a god other than me, I shall surely make thee one of the imprisoned. **(26:29)**

... قَالَ سَنُقَتِّلُ أَبْنَاءهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ

....Said he (the Pharaoh), `We shall slaughter their sons and spare their women; surely we are triumphant over them.' **(7:127)**

لأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُم مِّنْ خِلاَفٍ ثُمَّ لأُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you all together. **(7:124)**

This sort of brutal behaviour towards the bearers of the message of *Tawhid* was solely on account of the fact that it is a message of liberation and freedom. It is acceptance of belief in God as the sovereign and the sole authority in one's life, and negation of all pretenders to divinity, that is, contravention of all

such claims, by all means. Such is the real spirit of the doctrine of *Tawhid*, and the real essence of Islamic monotheism.